



Working Group
on
Principles of Commemoration and Renaming

FINAL REPORT

December 2018

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I. MANDATE AND PROCESS

In December 2017, Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) Christopher Manfredi asked Professor Anja Geitmann, Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and vice-principal, Macdonald Campus, and Professor Robert Leckey, Dean of the Faculty of Law, to co-chair a Working Group on Principles of Commemoration and Renaming (the “Working Group”). The Working Group’s composition and full mandate appear as Appendix I to this report. The heart of the mandate reads as follows:

The Working Group on Principles of Commemoration and Renaming is tasked with undertaking an examination of McGill’s relationship (past and current) with underrepresented groups, in the context of a broad-reaching reflection of our institutional history, with a view to recommending a set of principles by which the University may be guided in its decision-making with respect to any future commemorative or renaming initiative. The working group will take cues from Universities that have already undertaken similar exercises (such as Yale University and Dalhousie University).

Although participants in our consultations, in person or in writing, often appeared to think otherwise, the Working Group’s mandate did not direct us to pronounce on particular names or practices. Accordingly, this report refrains from doing so. This caveat is especially important since dozens of written submissions called on the Working Group to recommend changing the name of the men’s varsity teams, the Redmen, criticized our draft report for failing to do so, or both.

The mandate instructed the Working Group to consult widely across the McGill community, including alumni, as well as with representative communities across Montreal. We were to submit a final report and recommendations by 6 December 2018.

With a view to balancing representation and workability, Provost Manfredi in February 2018 finalized the Working Group’s membership at 14 individuals drawn from faculty, administrative staff, undergraduate and graduate students from the downtown and Macdonald campuses, and alumni. Student representatives were selected after an open call for expressions of interest.

The Working Group’s research assistant compiled a memorandum summarizing relevant approaches taken by peer universities, including Yale University and Dalhousie University.

The Working Group devised a consultation plan in two main steps, upstream and downstream of the preparation of a draft report. Upstream, it issued calls for written submissions and for expressions of interest in presenting at its hearings. The Working Group also targeted certain student groups and community groups, inviting them to participate in its hearings. At its hearings on 29 March 2018, the Working Group heard from seven individuals representing five student or alumni groups. By the initial deadline of 15 March 2018, the Working Group had received twelve written submissions. In the interests of broad consultation, it kept accepting submissions after the initial deadline. By 3 December 2018, the Working Group received 90 written submissions. Downstream, after circulation of its draft report, the Working Group held Town Halls on the

downtown and Macdonald campuses on 12 and 26 September 2018, respectively. During the summer and autumn, the Working Group or the co-chairs met with Indigenous members of the McGill community, elders, and staff at Indigenous community organizations. Appendix II lists groups or individuals that presented to the Working Group and the authors of written submissions who consented to be listed.

II. CONTEXT

At the outset, the Working Group reviewed McGill's mission statement and principles.

MISSION

The mission of McGill University is the advancement of learning and the creation and dissemination of knowledge, by offering the best possible education, by carrying out research and scholarly activities judged to be excellent by the highest international standards, and by providing service to society.

PRINCIPLES

In fulfilling its mission, McGill University embraces the principles of academic freedom, integrity, responsibility, equity, and inclusiveness.

McGill provides service to society not only by researching and teaching, but also by leading by example. A commitment to leading by example informs, notably, McGill's recent commitments and actions in relation to sustainability. Logically, such a commitment should also inform its approach to commemoration and renaming. McGill strives to play a distinctive role in society as a leader and exemplar of moral progress.

The Working Group's efforts unfolded against a context in which a number of institutions have been called on to rename buildings or awards that bear the names of historical figures whose legacies are at odds with contemporary moral, ethical, and political standards. Institutions around the globe have mandated administrative entities to establish principles on commemoration and renaming, including Amherst College, Stanford University, University of Michigan, University of Oregon, and Yale University. Other institutions have created bodies to guide a governing board in resolving a particular controversy around naming or commemoration, such as Brown University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, Princeton University, and the University of North Carolina. In the case of Brown, the connection to the slave trade has led to calls to rename the institution.

At McGill, the name of the men's varsity sports teams, the Redmen, has drawn critical attention over decades, as well as support from various quarters. In June 2017, the final report of the Provost's Task Force on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education recommended a consultation process that would lead to a renaming of those teams. In November 2018, the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) held a referendum on the question of changing the Redmen name, with a majority voting in favour of change. There has been increasing discussion,

including in the media, about James McGill's history as a slave-owner. Moreover, some members of the McGill community question the appropriateness of continuing to honour Stephen Leacock, given his political and social views, with a building in his name.

Ours is not the first exercise examining matters relating to McGill's relationship with groups underrepresented within the university. The university has undertaken a number of consultations and studies. There is a perception, understood and shared by the Working Group in some cases, that McGill has not acted sufficiently on the resulting recommendations and calls for change.

To give examples of these past engagements, in the 1960s and 1970s, McGill responded to calls that it recognize its location in a province of which French is the majority language (and, under provincial law, the official language). McGill addressed criticisms that it represented the viewpoint of a privileged elite with insufficient regard to its surrounding communities. More recently, our work follows the [final report](#) of the Principal's Task Force on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement (2011); the [report](#) of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Systemic Discrimination (2016); the [final report](#) of the Principal's Task Force on Respect and Inclusion in Campus Life (2018); and the [final report](#) of the Provost's Task Force just mentioned.

Several participants in our consultations expressed a sense of fatigue and cynicism, given the number of consultative exercises and a perceived shortage of consequential follow-up. Some suggested that this sense might have depressed the rate of participation in our consultations. Specifically, some of our interlocutors expressed bewilderment and dismay that the 2017 recommendation to launch a process with a view to renaming the men's varsity teams had led to a further consultative process not charged with deciding the issue. The author of a written submission – a McGill graduate formerly involved in student government – wrote that it is hard for students not to take the repeated creation of committees and working groups as “a recurring tactic to wait out community leaders.” For that author, the “constant creation of committees that continue to re-create the work of other committees directly contradicts the University's mission statement,” engendering an “overarching culture of mistrust.” An Indigenous student wrote that without immediate attention to the Redmen name, other recommendations or processes would be attempts by McGill to improve its image by a “veneer” of responsiveness, rather than genuine efforts to listen to Indigenous students and communities and work with them. While some fatigue and cynicism on the part of individuals and groups seeking full entry into large, slow-moving institutions may be unavoidable, we judge the levels of these sentiments as worrisome.

III. PROPOSED PRINCIPLES

We regard the following principles as consistent with McGill's Mission and Principles. Indeed, they flow from them. The principles follow in five sections. The principles in Section A include general notions that have guided the Working Group's deliberations. We intend them to condition the application of the action-oriented principles in successive sections.

Before we proceed, a word about terminology may be helpful. We often refer below to a “practice or state of affairs.” While cumbersome, this expression allows us to address simultaneously the

broad range of matters we see as within our mandate. One example of a “practice” is naming a building or a scholarship. Another is commissioning and displaying a portrait. At least in theory, a practice flows from an official decision, made at a particular moment. By another decision, a practice could cease or undergo alteration. Admittedly, the historical evidence for these elements of a practice is more readily available in some cases than in others. By “state of affairs,” we refer to a diffuse accumulation of facts, actions, and inactions. States of affairs may include the following: “No building on the McGill campuses is named after a racialized person”; “McGill does not openly acknowledge that its namesake, James McGill, owned slaves”; “The McGill website celebrates the [trail blazing](#) of white female graduates, but not of Indigenous or racialized graduates.” In contrast with a practice, a state of affairs likely does not result from an identifiable decision. Nor did it begin at an identifiable moment. Altering or ending a state of affairs may require sustained interventions of multiple kinds.

A. Orientation

The names and images on McGill’s campuses matter. Place names contribute to shaping our society. They have the power to shift our thinking and our ways of seeing and understanding where we have been, where we are, and with whom we are here. McGill sends messages through the way it names things and its choices about whose images it displays.

Positively, names and images allow some members of the McGill community to see themselves and to feel at home on the campuses. Members of groups historically included and represented at McGill may be largely unconscious of these processes, perhaps taking for granted their sense of comfort on the campuses. The name of a group, team, or academic unit might foreseeably generate stronger feelings of attachment and belonging than the name of a building. Negatively, the presence of some names and images, and the collective absence of others, may make it harder for other members of the McGill community to see themselves on the campuses and to feel at home. The campuses’ practices of commemoration and naming may cause harm in different ways. A practice or name that is offensive, or that over time has become offensive, may produce harm. Similarly, if it is widespread and severe enough, a group’s relative invisibility or an institutional silence regarding a harmful legacy may also produce harm. Place names have, then, the power to continue excluding communities that have been underrepresented, due to systemic barriers. Used carefully, in line with McGill’s mission and principles, names may also advance the inclusion of such communities. Advancing such inclusion is crucial to processes of reconciliation to which McGill has committed itself. As an Indigenous elder said during the Working Group’s consultations, reconciliation will be a lost cause “until everybody has a place at the table.”

Names and images provide an opportunity to educate. They memorialize some stories and not others. Monuments point to an aspect of history that decision makers consider worth commemorating. There is inevitably a process of selection in what gets remembered and honoured and what gets forgotten. McGill has the power, however, to intervene in that process. As an educational institution, McGill has the opportunity to educate through the narrative of its history. Uncovering stories long left untold can be powerful and revelatory.

We should make our histories more inclusive, rather than erasing history. Submissions and presentations told the Working Group repeatedly about problems arising from silence, invisibility, and erasure. Some problems relate to positive contributions made by communities whom McGill's official iconography and self-representation neglect to include or honour. Others relate to problematic aspects of individuals whom McGill honours. Participants in our consultations insisted that McGill must address and confront its historical legacies of wrong towards historically subordinated groups, rather than hiding from them. The upcoming bicentennial anniversary of the university may present opportunities for presenting a fuller "timeline" of McGill's history, perhaps through a book or website.

Where the problem is silence and invisibility, the remedy may be not a name change, but breaking that silence and ending that invisibility. In a number of the examples raised to the Working Group, the path for constructive action involves complicating our prevailing narratives and providing greater context, rather than simply removing a name. As an individual said to the Working Group: "Let us cease to glorify what is not glorious, but let us not forget either." In another's words, "Embrace history, warts and all: don't erase it." Renaming is a consequential gesture and it is not the first option when a name has become problematic or has long been so.

In some circumstances, a name change, properly made, may acknowledge lessons from history and gesture towards reconciliation. In special cases, renaming may be unavoidable. Furthermore, in some cases, renaming alone may be insufficient to address the name's harmful legacy. For example, the Working Group heard of the replacement of the former sports team names including a racial slur against Indigenous women ("Squ*ws" or "Super Squ*ws") without meaningful acknowledgement of the harm caused. In some cases, as a participant told us, "Just changing the name is not enough."

Some participants in our consultations – students, staff, and alumni – conveyed to the Working Group the view that moral courage demonstrated by McGill in grappling with its history may earn it respect and appreciation on the part of some alumni and other stakeholders. The Working Group shares this belief.

Language, symbols, and contexts may change over time. We acknowledge that historical figures operated in a social and political context different from ours. Similarly, we operate in a social and political context different from the ones in which future generations will judge our actions.

When commemoration of individuals is called into question, it is important, first, to attempt to assess the individuals' acts and views by the standards of their time and, as the case may be, by the standards of the time when McGill started honouring them. The attempt to assess individuals by the standards of an earlier time may call for taking account of multiple perspectives. As someone remarked during a consultation, settlers may historically have regarded slave ownership as acceptable, but the slaves knew it was morally indefensible. The case for altering the commemoration of individuals will be stronger if they actively developed or propagated an objectionable practice.

Yet the inquiry does not end with the history. McGill's current aspirations, needs, and responsibilities to those who make up its communities may be vastly different from those that defined McGill in the past. The widely received meaning or significance of a word or a symbol may change over time. Alterations to names, imagery, and practices on the part of peer institutions may provide evidence of such change in broader society.

The prevailing interpretation of an individual's principal legacy, by which we mean the major accomplishments for which we might remember that individual, may also change. Shifts in society's values might substantially alter the interpretation of an individual's principal legacy. So might new information about illegal conduct by that individual, as in the cases of some public figures highlighted by the #metoo/#moiaussi movement. McGill's [Policy Relating to the Naming of University Assets](#) already contemplates the termination or revocation of a naming "where retention of the name would be prejudicial to the University's reputation" (subsection 10.2).

The context in which McGill operates may also change. Consequently, a name or other commemorative practice may become an obstacle to the pursuit of McGill's mission, however benign its origins or the intent of those who adopted it. To respond to a concern raised repeatedly during the Working Group's consultations, inquiry into whether a name or practice has become untenable for McGill in today's context is not an inquiry into whether individuals attached to that name or practice are racist or morally culpable. Individuals naturally interpret names or symbols as they choose, irrespective of how their interpretation has kept pace with changes in society. The task for McGill is to determine whether the current and relatively stable prevailing interpretation or construal of a name or symbol aligns with its mission and principles. A decision regarding a name or practice is not a judgment on those who hold a contrary view.

Feelings matter. Participants in our consultations expressed a variety of strong feelings. While it may be more comfortable purporting to stick to facts, we regard acknowledging and grappling with feelings as relevant in this context, even unavoidable. Some participants expressed to the Working Group a strong sense of alienation, even of trauma, that they attributed to the absence or invisibility of people such as themselves in McGill's material and immaterial environments. A racialized individual who has worked at the university for many years reported never feeling "at home" at McGill. An Indigenous varsity athlete told us that seeing the Redmen jerseys in the gym felt like a dagger and that being called a Redman makes him sick. Another Indigenous student recounted attending a men's varsity basketball game, freezing as she realized that the fans of the visiting team were chanting, "No more Redmen!" The Working Group heard that the perception of McGill's legacy towards Indigenous peoples led communities to steer Indigenous students towards other universities. Indeed, an Indigenous student shared the following with the Working Group: "[D]espite my efforts to make space for myself, I still feel like a ghost, like an erased pencil mark." She added that until McGill put significant work into making the campuses better for marginalized students, she would not advise her cousins or other members of her community to attend McGill.

Other participants expressed a strong sense of pride in McGill or the unit within the university with which they connect more closely. For example, current and past athletes who presented to

the Working Group conveyed a deep pride in the Redmen and in the teams' records and traditions. They connected their sense of pride not only to the teams' history and accomplishments, but also to the name. During a Town Hall, a former varsity athlete said of himself: "I've got red in my veins." Another former varsity athlete compared the team name to a family name, highlighting its role in "emotional attachment, social identity and self-esteem." A jointly signed submission expressed attachment to the Redmen name so strong that the writers vowed that if the name were changed, they would never again donate to McGill, they would discourage their children from applying to McGill, they would "consider McGill dead to [them]," and might "actively work against its success."

The Working Group suggests that McGill, in acknowledging that feelings and perception matter, blend subjective and objective approaches. McGill cannot reasonably act in response to an individual's idiosyncratic reading. Feelings will merit greater weight in decision making when they are demonstrably shared and relatively enduring, rather than fleeting. What constitutes critical mass will differ from case to case, as a matter of judgment. In the Working Group's view, it is unrealistic and unreasonable to require scientific proof of feelings – be they of pride or alienation vis-à-vis the status quo – for such feelings to factor into decision making.

As it advances its mission, particularly as it embraces the principles of equity and inclusiveness, McGill must be aware that their experiences may foreseeably lead historically excluded or otherwise marginalized groups to understand meaning or significance differently than might those groups who have long operated as "insiders." It is important to accord weight to the voices of historically excluded or otherwise marginalized groups and, as the case may be, to their dignity interest. One reason is that McGill's decision-making structures may not traditionally have done so. By definition, historically underrepresented groups may not have been present in significant numbers within the McGill community or its leadership circles when decisions took place. Several participants voiced discomfort with an analysis that would purport to weigh, as equivalent interests, tradition-based attachment to a name or practice against objections to one arising from experienced harm or insult to a community or to an immutable or inherited identity.

Maintaining the status quo is a choice with potential consequences. It is natural to scrutinize a proposed change for its costs and benefits. In addition, the Working Group took seriously the idea that keeping things as they are is not costless. Depending on the case, doing so may cause reputational harm, prolong or intensify harm to underrepresented groups, and otherwise impede pursuit of the mission. In short, once members of the McGill community have credibly called a practice or situation into question, a full consideration of the issue cannot focus solely on the consequences of the proposed change, but must also assess the consequences of maintaining the status quo.

Determinations on these matters may be contentious and imperfect. The Working Group observed that, in the context of a broad-reaching reflection of our institutional history, McGill's past and current relationships with underrepresented groups are complicated. A posture of humility is necessary. While McGill prides itself on a tradition of excellence, not all issues relating to commemoration and renaming will have a single obvious answer. Moreover, it is unrealistic to

aspire to achieving consensus. Bringing McGill's commemoration and naming practices into line with contemporary social, political, and ethical standards will be challenging. In some cases, it will be controversial. McGill needs to show leadership and moral courage by acting in a principled fashion, even – and especially – in the face of disagreement. It must also be transparent in its processes and decision making, so that stakeholders now and in the future may appropriately assess them.

Commemoration and renaming are part of a broader picture. The Working Group heard affirmations that commemoration and renaming will be empty gestures if not accompanied by substantive change to McGill's administration and culture. Limited by its mandate, the Working Group cannot address the full range of changes that may be necessary as McGill pursues its mission in the light of its principles. The Working Group regards its work not as the end of the road, but as a step on a longer journey. Moreover, while a decision about commemoration or a name may appear binary when cast in the form of change or no change, either decision will likely open numerous questions and possibilities regarding what should follow. The process advancing from a decision on high-impact matters such as commemoration and renaming should involve multiple stakeholders and offer opportunities to advance McGill's mission and principles.

B. McGill's Face and Space

For nearly two centuries, McGill has been naming assets such as buildings and otherwise honouring individuals for their contributions to society, to McGill, or to both. Over those centuries, groups did not all enjoy equal access to resources and privilege, nor do they today. A consequence is that the names and images of McGill's campuses – including sculptures and painted portraits – may form, collectively, a museum of privilege. A number of participants in our consultations spoke of the McGill environment as embodying not only white privilege, but also white supremacy. The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines the latter as “the belief that white people are superior to those of all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society.” One participant suggested that the university's histories and the “deeply racialized marking and marking of its space” privilege white bodies as the “natural inhabitants of McGill's academic and social landscape.” For this participant, McGill's “geographies, landscaping, adornment, and commemoration practices” constitute a white male subject as “the ideal person who is served by and belongs at McGill.”

To be sure, the images and names of McGill's campuses can never exhaustively represent the university's history or its current community. Nevertheless, McGill should prioritize creating a campus environment that promotes a full and nuanced view of its history and context. To do so, it should draw on credible scholarship and the ongoing input of multiple stakeholders. Tools at McGill's disposal include signage, library and museum displays, teaching, public outreach, the Visual Arts Collection, online resources, and the naming of currently unnamed buildings. Adding elements to the physical and symbolic landscape, rather than removing ones, may be preferable. Such additions are less likely than removal to attract criticism for “erasing history.” Avoiding the distortion of history should guide decision-making at all points.

The Working Group's written and oral submissions pointed to the perceived silence around Indigenous peoples and racialized peoples, including James McGill's slaveholding, as particularly problematic. Some members of the McGill community perceive the campuses as spaces in which the experiences of people such as themselves are invisible or erased. The Working Group repeatedly heard the language of emotional and psychological pain, even trauma. It did so in connection with some people's reported experiences in an institution that they view as established thanks to wealth generated through processes of capitalist imperialism and colonialism and that has not acknowledged these origins. Specifically, **McGill has an immediate responsibility to address glaring silences or omissions regarding Indigenous persons and Black Canadians.** Such a duty aligns with McGill's principles of equity and inclusiveness. We cannot change the past, but we can change the present and the future – as well as how we talk about the past. Actions in response to this duty promise to have real, everyday outcomes on McGill's marginalized constituents.

In the face of the occasional tendency to combine claims under an umbrella of equity and inclusion, the Working Group is persuaded of the need for action specific to these two groups. There are general reasons and a shared specific reason for attention to these groups. Regarding Indigenous peoples, the general reason is that the longstanding effective absence of Indigenous peoples from the McGill community – as students, professors, and other staff – reflects this country's practices towards Indigenous peoples. The [final report](#) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) describes such practices as cultural genocide. It crystallizes the role of universities in contributing to repairing the damaged relationships between Canada and its Indigenous peoples. As a university operative for nearly 200 years, McGill has a substantial role to play. Including Indigenous peoples and celebrating their accomplishments meaningfully within the university requires changing its physical and symbolic landscapes. Regarding Black Canadians, the general reason is that a publicly funded university should serve its surrounding communities, among whom Black Canadians are underrepresented within McGill relative to their population in Montreal.

A more specific reason for attention to Indigenous peoples and Black Canadians comes from the history of James McGill, whose gift of £10,000 led to the university's establishment. James McGill, a slave owner of black and Indigenous people, accrued some of his wealth by knowingly trading in slave-produced plantation crops from slave-majority sites in the Anglo-Caribbean. In a Canadian context of pervasive collective amnesia regarding our colonial histories, and specifically our slaving histories, there is an opportunity for McGill to educate and to increase awareness.

On these issues, as on others, a robust response by the university will combine attention to the physical spaces of campus and to intangible symbolism and representations. To alter the physical spaces, the university might commission a monument to acknowledge enslaved people in Canada and the British Caribbean. A monument might anchor a commemorative public space saluting black McGill constituents. McGill might make such acknowledgement by naming a major building on one of the campuses. Construction of a longhouse or creation of an Indigenous art collection, perhaps on the site of the Royal Victoria Hospital, might offer a meeting place and space for

education. An official Indigenous land acknowledgement could be made on permanent plaques on the campuses. Plaques or other commemorative devices on McGill's campuses might similarly acknowledge the university's historical ties to trans-Atlantic slavery. Less tangibly but nevertheless highly visibly, McGill might feature prominently on its website a critical history of its founding and of its founder, highlighting James McGill's colonial context and the links between his wealth and slave owning in Montreal and in the West Indies. The website might celebrate the achievements within McGill's history of black people, Indigenous people, and other people of colour, as it already does for the "[blazing trails](#)" of women. Recruitment scholarships for Indigenous students and black students born within Canada would signal openness and a desire to include groups historically underrepresented. The Working Group heard the suggestion that McGill establish a Department of African Canadian Studies.

Subsequent sections of this report set out the Working Group's recommended approaches for treating calls to change McGill's commemoration practices or to rename something. Those approaches presuppose that an individual or group will submit a request or otherwise trigger the process. McGill has been put on notice, however, that the presence of Indigenous peoples and racialized peoples, including their history within the university, is unjustifiably slight. Burdening individuals within these groups with the responsibility of launching a process or of demonstrating their underrepresentation in the images and names of McGill's campuses would be inappropriate. It is up to the university to take action and to embody a fuller, richer history of McGill on its campuses.

McGill should diversify the communities represented in the names on our campuses, celebrating a wider range of contributions to McGill and to the world. For example, one participant observed that our internal James McGill Professorships and William Dawson Scholarships, established in 2000, honour significant figures in McGill's history who are already substantially celebrated. Unlike many other cases, this naming does not execute a commitment made by the university in consideration of a donation. It was suggested that there was an opportunity to rename these awards, recognizing other contributors to McGill's history. While much older, the Sir William C. Macdonald Chairs recognize a donor who is otherwise thoroughly commemorated on the campuses.

When naming new or existing assets, McGill should make effort to recognize marginalized and underrepresented individuals and groups, within the parameters of McGill's [Policy Relating to the Naming of University Assets](#). The current practice of naming buildings after donors, rather than after individuals having made major academic achievements, may merit reflection. One submission to the Working Group characterized the current naming culture as "one of missed opportunities," or at least noted the potential for changing the balance of current names by renaming "major buildings with generic names, such as the Arts Building, and those with names that recall lost places, such as [McIntyre](#) and [Burnside](#)." That submission argued that such references have little contemporary impact. Other buildings on campus are known, uninspiringly, by their addresses. Examples are 3605 de la Montagne and 3647, 3674, and 3690 Peel. In other words, it is erroneous to suppose that the naming of a building on campus in recognition, say, of

individuals from marginalized and underrepresented communities needs to wait until one of them donates millions of dollars to finance construction of a building.

C. Change to Commemoration

McGill should alter its commemoration or naming practices where the harm outweighs the good. No equation leads to such a determination. It is a matter of ethical and political judgment, weighing disparate factors. The exercise is difficult because it is foreseeable that some members of the McGill community will experience a practice or state of affairs as good while others will experience it as harmful. The following questions should guide the examination of particular cases.

1. *Understanding the Status Quo*

- What was the practice or state of affairs' original meaning and significance? What were the intentions in setting it up? What is its justification?
- Is the practice or state of affairs an important source of pride, loyalty, connection, and community building among McGillians?
- Where something is named after a person, is the principal legacy of the person so honoured fundamentally at odds with McGill's mission and principles?
- Where applicable, how significant was the namesake's contributions to McGill?
- What significance and meanings has the practice or state of affairs acquired over time? Specifically, what significance and meaning predominate in the contexts relevant to McGill – among the McGill community, among outside stakeholders, and among the population locally and globally?

2. *The Case for Change*

- What harm is associated with the practice or state of affairs in question?
- How severe is the harm, including how widely is it known, within local and broader contexts, and what evidence is there of negative impact?
- Does the practice or state of affairs impede McGill in carrying out its mission and in honouring its principles? For example, does the practice or state of affairs have a negative impact on members of the McGill community or on their sense of belonging to McGill? Does it harm McGill's reputation locally or elsewhere? Does the practice or state of affairs have a negative impact on individuals outside the McGill community? Does the practice or state of affairs reduce McGill's capacity to follow its principles of equity and inclusiveness by broadening membership in the McGill community? What evidence is there that relevant feelings are shared and relatively enduring?
- Does the practice or state of affairs prolong or intensify past exclusion or other wrongs or harms?

3. Options and Consequences

- What are possible changes to the practice or state of affairs? Is renaming an appropriate solution? How does it compare with others?
- Are there ways to educate and promote reflection by providing a fuller history about the practice or the state of affairs?
- What would McGill give up or gain by keeping the practice or state of affairs?
- What would McGill give up or gain by altering the practice or state of affairs?
- What remedial or mitigating measures might channel or redirect people’s sense of attachment once a practice or state of affairs is changed?
- Where applicable, have peer institutions that share or have shared a similar practice or state of affairs indicated by their actions that it no longer aligns with their values?

D. Renaming

When a name has become problematic, renaming is not the first option. In some cases, renaming may be the sole satisfactory measure. Used judiciously, renaming may acknowledge lessons from history and gesture towards reconciliation.

The Working Group regards calls for renaming a building or other object as a subset of calls for a change to commemorative practices. When a name is not that of an individual, the question of the namesake’s contributions to McGill and principal legacy do not apply.

E. Process

The Working Group proposes that McGill’s process in addressing matters of commemoration and renaming needs to be credible, transparent, and effective.

Credibility requires independence, integrity, and scholarly rigour in reviewing calls for change. It appeared advisable to the Working Group to separate the functions of reviewing calls for change and of making final decisions on them. More specifically, reviewing calls for change might involve the following: fact-finding, consultations, moral deliberation on the question of whether an established practice or name offends contemporary ethical and political standards, identification of possible outcomes, risk assessment of possible outcomes, and formulation of a recommendation. **We suggest that the principle of independence and integrity calls for a committee at arm’s length from the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic), the Office of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, and the Board of Governors.** Such independence would echo Call to Action 20 from the Provost’s [Task Force](#).

The Secretariat might receive calls for change, transmitting them to the committee. The committee would consider calls for change and make a recommendation regarding them. Drawing on its experience and knowledge acquired through its process, the committee might also include recommendations regarding how the university might address the response to any eventual

decision. Any decision on matters such as commemoration and renaming is likely to disappoint at least some stakeholders and members of the McGill community.

To carry out its mandate with integrity, the committee would need to include a diverse membership, including representatives from historically excluded and marginalized groups. Membership should include representatives from student associations serving such groups. The committee should include professors from McGill with credentials in areas relevant to the committee's work, such as historians or art historians. In addition, the committee should include other representatives of the McGill community, such as administrative staff and alumni, perhaps via a person nominated by the McGill Alumni Association. The committee's composition merits the utmost attention, as its credibility will depend on it. The committee would need to have appropriate resources, including the possibility of securing outside expertise where necessary. It would need to take proactive steps to ensure that it hears from marginalized constituents, who may be the most vulnerable, affected by colonial histories, and deterred from participation by the university's normalized whiteness.

While the final decision maker will unavoidably consider a range of factors, including moral and consequential ones, the at-arm's-length body should examine the ethical and moral question raised by the practice or name distinctly from an evaluation of the costs of a change.

Depending on the issue, the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) or the Board of Governors would receive the recommendation and determine the appropriate course of action.

The Working Group considered the status of the committee it foresees. A standing committee might predictably enjoy the perception of more independence than would an ad hoc committee. (Section 7.4 of the Policy Relating to the Naming of University Assets contemplates an ad hoc committee struck by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor.) A standing committee might develop expertise that would increase its effectiveness. The review process of a standing committee might foreseeably be faster than that of an ad hoc committee, freshly constituted each time. An ad hoc committee has greater potential, however, for its composition to reflect needs relating to the particular issue.

Transparency demands that, to the greatest extent possible, processes and decision-making rationales be publicly available. So should the methods used and information gathered through research. Such transparency will serve three purposes: it will enable appropriate evaluation by present and future stakeholders; it will dispel a sense of exclusion or secrecy on questions that are necessarily emotional and contentious; and it will offer an educational opportunity regarding McGill's past and present. The committee might spell out how it took respectful account of the sensitivities involved.

Effectiveness entails responsiveness and speed. Once the committee has gone through its process, a decision by the appropriate university authority should follow quickly. After a decision, action should follow promptly. The Working Group heard repeatedly that a perceived lack of

action, including delays, has undermined the university's efforts in relation to inclusion. Accordingly, the committee should establish and follow clear timelines.

While effectiveness requires clarity and action, the Working Group acknowledges that recommendations by the committee and an eventual decision may not hold for all time, as language, interpretations, and contexts continue to evolve. Without venturing to lay down a precise rule, the Working Group foresees that some issues might return to the committee, say a decade later.

In addressing the Working Group's larger context of commemoration and McGill's relationship with underrepresented groups, **effectiveness also demands concerted, proactive treatment of these issues**, reaching beyond a committee's adjudication of punctual calls for change. The university should consider how to ensure such ongoing, proactive treatment in an enduring way. The Working Group identifies a need for responsibility, accountability, and resources relating to McGill's efforts to redress the problems identified in this report. On issues such as the relative invisibility of some historically underrepresented groups on campus, the need is not for a further decision, but for creative action – backed by resources. A staff person reporting to the Associate Provost (Equity and Academic Policies) might be an appropriate leader for these efforts.

* * *

The members of the Working Group are grateful for the privilege of undertaking our work. We leave it with increased understandings of the multitudinous symbols making up the material and immaterial spaces experienced as McGill, the deep complexity of the issues studied, and the profound importance of the university's taking concrete steps to address those issues. We are grateful for the broad range of input and feedback we received during our work. While participants in our consultative processes expressed a range of viewpoints, a number of them appearing to conflict, we were heartened by their broadly shared feelings of attachment and commitment to McGill and to its communities and by their desire to participate fully and take their place within them.

Appendix I

Working Group on Principles of Commemoration and Renaming

Co-chairs:

Anja Geitmann, Dean, Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Science and Associate Vice-Principal, Macdonald Campus

Robert Leckey, Dean, Faculty of Law

Members:

Dominic Bell, Law graduate and former university athlete

Cindy Blackstock, Professor, School of Social Work

Pascal Brissette, Professor and Chair of the Department of French Language and Literature

Stuart Cobbett, Chair Emeritus, McGill Board of Governors

Dianne Fagan, Director, Strategic Initiatives

Tynan Jarrett, Employment Equity Advisor

Yves Lapointe, Director and University Archivist

Kelvin Mansaray, Undergraduate student, History

Charmaine Nelson, Professor of Art History

Cynthia Price Verreault, Member, Board of Governors

Alexandra Stewart, Graduate student, Education

Research assistant and secretary:

Laurence Saint-Pierre Harvey

Mandate

In recent years, universities across North America have been confronted by the necessity to reconcile past with present – to address a dissonance between certain thoughts, actions, and policies of earlier eras with current institutional identity, mission and aspiration. In particular, institutions have been pressed to rename buildings or awards that bear the names of historical figures whose legacies are at odds with modern expectations. In some cases, the name of the institution itself has been called into question. At McGill, it is the name of the mens' varsity sports teams, the Redmen, that has recently drawn critical attention.

McGill University has been a central pillar of Montreal society since its inception, and its graduates have influenced the development of the nation for nearly two hundred years. With our bicentennial approaching in 2021, we have an opportunity for both reflection and imagination. As we look ahead to our third century and build on the commitment that McGill will be a 21st-century global university, and as we celebrate two centuries of achievement, we must also engage in critical reflection.

The Working Group on Principles of Commemoration and Renaming is tasked with undertaking an examination of McGill's relationship (past and current) with underrepresented groups, in the context of a broad-reaching reflection of our institutional history, with a view to recommending

a set of principles by which the University may be guided in its decision-making with respect to any future commemorative or renaming initiative. The working group will take cues from Universities that have already undertaken similar exercises (such as Yale University and Dalhousie University).

In completing this mandate, the Working Group will consult widely across the McGill community, including alumni. It will likewise consult with representative communities across Montreal. The final report and recommendations will be submitted to the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) by Thursday, 6 December 2018.

Appendix II

Groups

The following groups or officials presented at the Working Group's hearings or met otherwise with the Working Group or with one or both of the co-chairs.

Allan Vicaire, First Peoples' House, McGill University
Bear Clan Matron Louise Wakerakatste McDonald (Mama Bear)
Black Students' Network
Friends of McGill Hockey
Friends of McGill Rugby
Karonhienhawe Linda Delormier, Kahnawake
McGill Alumni Association
McGill Association of University Teachers
Muslim Law Students' Association
Native Friendship Centre of Montreal
Special Advisor, Indigenous Initiatives, Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)
Students' Society of McGill University Equity Commissioners
Students' Society of McGill University Indigenous Affairs Commissioner

Individuals

The following individuals are those who, among those who authored or co-signed the 90 written submissions received by 3 December 2018, gave consent for the Working Group to list their names.

Annmarie Adams
Madelyn Aaron
Eloïse Albaret
Alix Albright
Andrea Almeida-Pasko
Anastassios (Tassos)
Anastassiadis
Aneeka Anderson
Fatima Anjum
Andreann Asibey
Rachael Atkinson
Caitlyn Atkinson
Melanie Audrain
Carlene Ayukawa
Mikaela Bakey
Julia Barclay
Darin Barney
Florence Barre
Safiya Bashir Sherif
Marie J. Béland
Lydia Bhattacharya
Vivien Bian
Frédérique Blanchard
Tiffany Blattgerste
Sarah Bloch
Sophie Boissonnault
Lesley Borowski
Lauren Bossen
Alan Boucher
Marie Boulfroy
Gillian Bradley
Andy Bromley
Asa Brunet-Jailly
Anna Buchanan
Corrine Bulger
Bryan Buraga
Ariane Busablon
Nicki Butkowsky
Angela Campbell
Laurie Carmichael
Ambre Chaillet
Annie Chen
Jasmine Chi
Victor Chisholm

Grégoire Collet
Nathalie Cooke
Lara Cooper
Isabelle Côté
Brian Cowan
Aleem Damji
Laurel Davis-Delano
Diane Dechief
Linda Delormier
Astrid Delva
Eugénie Demarta
Rosanna Dent
Catherine Desbarats
Mathilde Deschamps
Nicholas Dew
Francesca Di Re
Colin Donahoe
Allan Downey
Stephanie Du
Sana Duggal
Timothee Dulac
Meghan Eaker
Vivian Eberle
Myron Echenberg
Neil Edelman
Rim El Osta
Nadia El-Sherif
Elizabeth Elbourne
Heydar Ensha
Nadia Fernandez
Lou Fevrier
Shanon Fitzpatrick
Sean Flynn
Ianna Folkes
Audrey Fortin
Alizee Frachet
Madison Frehlick
Panayot Gaidov
Robert Gales
Daniela Garabito
Manuel Garcia
Jeremy Garneau
Leila Gebara
Leo Gelfand

Sydney Gemin
Marjan Ghazi
Isabelle Ghelerter
Felix Giroux
Marguerite Gobbi
Aimee Gonzalez de Armas
Clemence Gorjux
Amber Gott
Pearce Gould
Romy Gravel
Allan Greer
Claire Grenier
Jonathan Gurvey
Corinna Ha
Nellia Halimi
Aya Hamdan
Xin Hao Yang
Lucas Harvey
Jordyn Heal
Elsbeth Heaman
Anam Hossain
Zi Jun Huang
Rachelle Hynes
Charlotte Imbert
Kelly Jacques
Vida Javidi
Tomas Jirousek
Nabeela Jivraj
Juliet Johnson
Julia Jolly
Amine Kabbadj
Rebecca Kachmar
Sofie Katz
Athina Khalid
Fahad Khan
Kailey Kimsa
Jadyn Kist
Bartha Knoppers
Anna Kobryn
Charlotte Koch
Selin Kucukoglu
Minalou Kunze-Roelens
Florence La Rochelle
Réginal Labonté

Anabelle Laframboise	Derek Nystrom	James Terrasi
Rasha Lama	Michael Ogundeji	Christelle Tessono
André Lametti	Benjamin Oldham	Meaghan Thurston
Marc Latif	Skylar Page	Sidney Tiansay
Christina Lau	Phoebe Pannier	Patrick Timmer
Robyn Lee	Claire Paoli	Hannah Tipper
Hilary Lee	Barbara Parrott	Elizabeth Tkach
Thea Lee	Laila Parsons	Maya Tostevin
Brian Lewis	Joël Pedneault	Valentine Touzeau
Brittany Lieberman	Arno Pedram	Voula Tsagaroulis
Daniil Lisus	Bruno Pietrobon	Venus Vafamanesh
Ricky Liu	Yasir Piracha	Cristina Venegas
Kristal Lok	Zlata Plotnikova	Anya Vilchez
Ehab Lotayef	April Popaditch	Thomas Villeneuve
Boyan Low	Bradley Por	Nelly Wat
Fair Lyons	Richard Pound	Lauren Weinstock
Matthew M.	Isabelle Prévost-Aubin	Maiya Werba
Abigail Mackenzie-Armes	Nicola Protetch	Charlie Whitman
Laura Madokoro	Haoyi Qiu	Sophie Wiczorek
Mariam Madwar	Megha Rahi	Carly Wigdor
Katrin Maliatski	Umema Rajput	Dylan Wong
Sarim Malik	Falah Rajput	Chole Wong-Mersereau
Reem Mandil	Karen Rakotondralambo	Samantha Wren
Tre Mansdoerfer	Hanna Ranstrand	Lucille Xiang
Ella Martindale	Matthieu Reed	Ziyu Xiao
Matthew McLaughlin	Eva Ren	Karl Zayat
Wayne McRae	Justine Renaud	Tom Zhai
Caitlin Mehrotra	Marc Richard	
Philippe Meilleur	Elise Robert-Michon	
Nathan Mendel	Bailey Robinson	
Timothy Merlis	Justine Ronis-Le Moal	
Angel Miao	Elizabeth Roy	
Moses Milchberg	Richard Rusk	
Carman Miller	Alyssa Satterthwaite	
Gordon Milne	Bhoomika Saxena	
Thomas Milne	Amanda Scharf	
Chris Montgomery	Adam Segreti	
Monique Morin	Rachel Seo	
Suzanne Morton	Norina Sun	
Chanchal Nankani	Daniel Sun	
Cassia Nasralla	Denzel Sutherland-Wilson	
J.M. Nelson	Paulina Symala	
Julian Nguyen	Raphael Tanneur	
Amanda Nicol	Nicole Templeton	